



Portraits of Patriotism

The U.S. Army on San Juan Hill

IN 1898 hostilities broke out between Spain and the United States over independence for Cuba. With Civil War action more than three decades distant, the tiny U.S. Army drew its most seasoned troops from the cavalry regiments that had fought the Indian wars of the late 19th century.

“The Charge of the 1st and 10th Regular Cavalry — Las Guasimas, 1898” by Howard Chandler Christy (*above*) depicts the famous assault by those units, along with the 1st Volunteer Cavalry (COL Teddy Roosevelt’s “Rough Riders”), on San Juan Hill, overlooking Santiago, Cuba. The Spanish-American War marked a turning point in reconciliation between Northerner and Southerner, who now fought side by side under the Stars and Stripes.

The white soldiers of the 1st Cav. and the 1st Volunteer Cav., and the “Buffalo Soldiers” of the 9th and 10th Cav., provided covering fire for each other’s advances and charged through Spanish fire. The seizure of San Juan Hill permitted a siege of Santiago that forced the city’s surrender and secured U.S. victory in Cuba. The victory at San Juan Hill showed what a racially integrated military could accomplish, but it was not until 50 years later that President Harry S. Truman formally integrated the military services. — *CPT Patrick Swan*

